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Killing People, Dividing a Nation? Analyzing Student Perceptions of the Boko Haram Crisis in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The causes and consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency as well as its possible solutions have been subjected to different interpretations among scholars, politicians, and journalists. Little is known, however, about how the Nigerian populace thinks about the uprising. The present study contributes to the literature on Boko Haram by analyzing the perceptions of Nigerian students vis-à-vis Boko Haram's agenda and the government's response. The results demonstrate a north-south divide with Christians or Igbo and Muslims or Hausa-Fulani holding different ideas on the causes of the crisis, being differently affected by it, and slightly disagreeing on the desirability of military government responses. In conclusion, perceptions on Boko Haram lay bare ethno-religious fault lines reflecting existing grievances, thereby possibly undermining efforts at nation-building and peaceful coexistence in the multi-ethnic Nigerian society.

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On the night of 14 April 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped nearly 300 schoolgirls from Chibok town in the north-east of Nigeria. The abduction shocked not only the Nigerian nation, but the international community as well. The United Nations Security Council denounced the kidnapping as a “crime against humanity.”¹ Nigeria's president at the time, Goodluck Jonathan, was intensively criticized for his handling of the crisis.² Even Michelle Obama, the U.S. first lady and advocate for women's rights, condemned the act as “unconscionable” and supported the social media offensive to “#Bringbackourgirls.”³ Ever since, the crisis has attracted increased attention and has resulted in an intensification of responses. According to the Global Terrorism Index, Boko Haram—Nigeria's latest security threat—had overtaken the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014 “to become the most deadly terrorist group in the world.”⁴

Several scholars have discussed the history and motives of Boko Haram as well as the consequences of and solutions for the crisis.⁵ Although the movement has earlier roots, it has come to prominence with the July 2009 uprisings in Borno state, northern Nigeria. Largely, three main reasons for this outbreak of violence are put forward: religious radicalization and the quest for a *Sharia* state, the overall socioeconomic situation in the country and

particularly the relative deprivation of the northern region, and failed governance coupled with weak institutions. Furthermore, some studies have criticized that escalatory counterterrorism approaches have taken preference to dialogue and conciliatory measures.⁶ Since the escalation of violence in 2009 and the following governmental repression, the crisis has led to tens of thousands of lives lost, massive displacement, and a significant drop in economic activity.⁷

Notwithstanding these valuable insights on the origins of and solutions for the Boko Haram crisis, little is known about public perceptions about these explanations and ongoing military approaches, and about the extent to which public perceptions diverge or converge across ethnic and religious cleavages. Although both Olaniyan and Asuelime⁸ and Onapajo and Usman⁹ have suggested that Boko Haram widens Nigeria's ethno-religious cleavages, there is still no large-scale empirical study that shows whether and how Boko Haram has contributed to polarization in Nigerian society. As a first step to addressing this gap, this article analyzes the opinions of Nigerian students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds on the causes, consequences, and solutions to the insurgency. For this purpose, we analyze recent data from the Corpers' Survey collected in Nigerian universities in 2015. This student sample provides a detailed picture of perceptions on Boko Haram among Nigeria's future societal and political leaders, but also among a vulnerable group of youngsters susceptible to Boko Haram's recruitment efforts. The study clearly exposes a north-south division: perceptions on Boko Haram lay bare ethno-religious fault lines reflecting long-standing grievances, thereby undermining possible efforts at nation-building and peaceful coexistence in the multiethnic Nigerian society.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section provides an overview of the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria and its recent decline. Next, we highlight our methodological approach before describing the causes, the consequences, and the government's responses to the Boko Haram crisis in the following three sections. Within each of these three sections, we analyze to what extent student perceptions converge or diverge from the ideas put forward in the literature. Special attention is paid to differences in opinions between students from different ethno-religious backgrounds. Finally, we draw some conclusions, point out limitations, and make suggestions for future research.

The Rise (and fall?) of Boko Haram

Boko Haram identifies itself as a *Salafist-jihadi* movement that openly opposes secular authority and actively strives for the implementation of *Sharia* law in the entirety of Nigeria.¹⁰ Although the exact date of the emergence of Boko Haram is mired in controversy, it is commonly acknowledged that the sect's¹¹ historical roots can be traced in the mid-1990s¹² in northeastern Nigeria. However, it has especially come to prominence with the July 2009 uprisings in Borno state, in the north of Nigeria, and the following escalation of violence. It is believed that the sect has flourished under diverse names such as *Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra*, the Nigerian or Yobe Taliban, and *Yusu-fiyyah* before it became widely known as Boko Haram. The contested nickname "Boko Haram," which is a combination of Hausa and Arabic words, means "western or non-Islamic education is a sin."¹³ The sect, on the other hand, names itself "*Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad*," meaning "People Committed to the Propagation of the

Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." In this way, the group wants to stress that Boko Haram does not mean "western Education is forbidden" but "western civilization is forbidden" and that it should be replaced by the Islamic culture.¹⁴

The exact number of Boko Haram members is unknown. While Amnesty International carefully estimates that the group has at least 15,000 members,¹⁵ scholars and journalists state that the sect could have over 40,000,¹⁶ 280,000,¹⁷ or even 540,000¹⁸ members in Nigeria and neighboring countries such as Niger, Cameroon, and Chad as well as Sudan and Mali. Although Boko Haram is believed to include some well-educated, wealthy, and influential people including former political elites, it recruits mainly from disaffected youths, school drop-outs, unemployed graduates, and street children (often former *Almajiris*¹⁹) mostly but not exclusively from northern Nigeria (especially Borno and Yobe states). In addition to voluntary members, it is argued that Boko Haram also engages in extensive and radical sermons including the threat of using violence to recruit members.²⁰

Although it is estimated that Boko Haram is made up of three to six factions,²¹ it does seem to have an established organizational structure including a central leader. At the beginning, it was led by commander-in-chief Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, a charismatic preacher who died in July 2009 in what has allegedly been an extrajudicial killing by police officers. Immediately after his death, Mallam Sanni Umaru became acting leader. Since then, several persons have claimed to be chief at various times. Presently, Abubakar Shekau²² is believed to be the political and spiritual head of the sect, while Mallam Abul Qaqa is its spokesman.²³ Civil society organizations and scholars claim that the operations of the sect are largely funded by daily membership fees (100 naira), but also by donations from politicians, government officials, and other individuals and (terrorist) organizations within and outside Nigeria.²⁴ Some of their money is also supposed to come from looting, bank robberies, and ransoms. This stream of income finances a large scale of weaponry including cudgels, bows and arrows, guns, and bombs.²⁵

The sect deploys various tactics including conventional and suicide bomb attacks, hit-and-run raids on villages, and the capture of larger towns in the north-east of the country.²⁶ In 2014 the violence escalated, leading to almost 7,000 deaths and making it the "most deadly terrorist group in the world" that year.²⁷ Compared to prior insurgent groups in Nigeria, Boko Haram seems more sophisticated, stronger linked with foreign actors, and more controversial in terms of demands and goals.²⁸ However, since he was inaugurated as Nigeria's new president in May 2015, Muhammadu Buhari has undertaken a new offensive with assistance from the armed forces of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The campaign has succeeded in recapturing major towns in northeastern Nigeria that were hitherto under control of Boko Haram. But although Buhari announced at the end of 2015 that Boko Haram was "technically defeated,"²⁹ the militant group has continued to kill civilians through raids on smaller towns and bomb attacks in 2016.³⁰

Method

This article aims to analyze Nigerian public opinion on the causes and consequences of, and the responses to, the Boko Haram insurgency. Specifically, we wonder to what extent public opinion follows the views outlined in the academic literature and national media. Furthermore, special attention is paid to differences in perceptions between ethno-religious groups. These research objectives explore the proposition that the impact of the Boko Haram

insurgency goes beyond the well-reported physical and economic damage: by diverging the population's opinion, it is possible that Boko Haram causes a worsening of inter-group relations.

This study relies on both secondary and primary data sources. The next three sections investigate the causes, consequences, and preferred government responses with regard to Boko Haram. For each section, we first discuss academic articles and media reports to represent the views mentioned in these secondary sources. Next, each section is complemented with primary data from a large-scale opinion survey (i.e., the Corpers' Survey) conducted in 2015 in Nigerian universities. Large-scale social survey data containing empirical evidence on opinions vis-à-vis the insurgency is extremely scarce.³¹ The student survey was designed to analyze to what extent the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program contributes to improving inter-group relations and fostering stronger national identities among its participants, but also contains valuable questions on how the students perceive the Boko Haram crisis. These questions and their descriptives can be found in Appendix A. The survey took place in five major Nigerian universities,³² carefully selected to ensure a proper ethno-regional and religious mix of respondents, but also guaranteeing the safety of the researchers. Respondents were invited to participate in a short in-class, paper-and-pencil self-administered questionnaire. In total 6,830 students³³ took part in the study (55.9 percent male; 43.7 percent female) with an average age of 24. More information on the sociodemographic characteristics can be found in Appendix B. As information on the place of birth, religion, and ethnic group of the respondents was included in the survey, we could discern differences in opinions vis-à-vis Boko Haram between various ethno-religious groups by using chi-square tests, *t*-tests, and ANOVAs.³⁴ The sections below describe the results of these tests including corresponding tables at the end of each section (see [Tables 1](#) and [2](#)).

It is important to note that university students are a particular subgroup of the population in terms of educational level, literacy, financial resources, mobility, and access to new technologies, which obviously prohibits us to generalize our results to the wider Nigerian population. Nevertheless, university students are an extremely interesting research population in itself, because today's students are tomorrow's societal and political elites. Moreover, it is also important to seek the views of students about Boko Haram because the sect recruits predominantly among young men and women—especially among those who fail to find work after completing higher education.³⁵

Boko Haram: The Causes

Like its origin, the *raison d'être* of the Boko Haram insurgency is controversial because multiple competing analyses have been used to explain the goals, demands, and causes of the uprising.³⁶ We divided the different root causes discussed by various authors into three main explanations: religious fundamentalism and ideology, sustained poverty and unemployment in the northern regions of the country, and bad governance and institutional fragility.³⁷ These structural conditions and grievances combined—while they may not be sufficient explanations on their own—provide essential insights into the emergence of Boko Haram when complemented by facilitators, external factors, and particular triggers.³⁸

First and foremost, journalists, scholars, and politicians view the sect as a strictly religious quagmire given Boko Haram's public advocacy for the stringent implementation of *Sharia*

law in the entire country.³⁹ Religion has always played a vital and influential role in Nigerian society regularly manifesting itself as a strong force in the political process.⁴⁰ Boko Haram adds to this debate on the place of religion in governance as it explicitly abhors the secularization and westernization of the government⁴¹ and strives for a strict application of *Sharia* law as a societal cleanser.⁴² Therefore, many have argued that Boko Haram is the manifestation of religious commitment and fundamentalist indoctrination embedded in the contemporary global *jihadi* utopianism of Al Qaeda, the Taliban, or ISIS.⁴³ They claim that Boko Haram is principally waging a war against Christians and non-indigenes in the north as well as against the un-Islamic and democratic government in order to end Western influence.⁴⁴ In this respect, the Nigerian journal, *The Guardian*, reported that:

[...] the Boko Haram Islamic Sect which had continued to [...] kill innocent citizens, particularly Christians, in their bid to turn Nigeria into an Islamic nation. The church noted reports that Christians were being forced to denounce the name of Jesus Christ and embrace Islam and those who refused to do so were being killed in cold blood.⁴⁵

Second, Nigeria's extreme poverty, unemployment, inequality, economic underdevelopment, and low education are thought to serve as major sources of grievances harbored by the sect.⁴⁶ In particular, there is a vast socioeconomic disparity between the north and other parts of Nigeria. Based on a report of The National Bureau of Statistics, BBC News reported that the absolute poverty rates (i.e., number of people who can only afford bare essentials of shelter, food, and clothing) in the north-west and north-east of the country reached 77.7 percent and 76.3 percent, respectively, compared to 59.1 percent in the south-west.⁴⁷ Moreover, the northern region is confronted with an extremely low level of infrastructural and human capacity development evidenced by the low level of education and high level of unemployment, particularly among the youth. This situation of relative deprivation led BBC African analyst Richard Hamilton to conclude that "it is perhaps no surprise that extremist groups, such as Boko Haram, continue to have an appeal in northern parts of the country, where poverty and underdevelopment are at their most severe."⁴⁸ The provision of welfare, food, and shelter by the antistate, fundamentalist group could constitute a strong incentive for dissatisfied youth. Additionally, the group provides the opportunity to use violence for looting private and public businesses, and can give youth the feeling that they are worth something for the first time in their lives.⁴⁹ In this respect, researchers also argue that members of Boko Haram are essentially uneducated and jobless youth, school drop-outs, and students from a low socioeconomic background or with a formal education but who failed to find work within the current Nigerian situation. In other words, Aghedo and Osumah conclude that Boko Haram's membership "relates to the depth feeling about socioeconomic injustice, marginalization and human insecurity."⁵⁰

Third and in a similar vein, various scholars and politicians see the Boko Haram insurgency as a reaction to the widespread corruption, moral decadence, pervasive inefficiency, and general impunity prevalent among the political upper class.⁵¹ Since independence, the leadership of Nigeria has been seen as fraudulent, wasteful, and insensitive to the genuine needs and aspirations of the constituents despite the country's immense human and natural resources. This created a sphere of general human insecurity breeding discontent among the populace.⁵² Successive governments have failed to create an inclusive program addressing poverty across all regions. As a result, people living in the north feel particularly neglected by their government causing a general sense of injustice in these areas.⁵³ Institutional fragility not only causes grievances, it also facilitates terrorist uprisings by creating an environment where terrorists can easily

build their sanctuaries. Poor border management, for instance, paves the way for the smuggling of deadly arms and drugs, and makes it easier for militants to seek shelter in neighboring countries after their strikes.⁵⁴ The ill-equipped, weak, and notoriously corrupt security apparatus was (until recently) largely unable to conduct large-scale antiterror operations—a situation that also served the rise of Boko Haram.⁵⁵ Other possible facilitators include demographic factors such as the immense population density of Nigeria and the presence of a youth bulge that substantially increased the steady and cheap supply of economically deprived individuals susceptible for recruitment.⁵⁶ In addition to these internal facilitators, external factors and foreign support aid the operations of the sect. The Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the ethno-linguistic ties between the countries stimulate smuggling and migration.⁵⁷ Moreover, the sect shares the ideology of other Islamist movements such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Shabaab, or ISIS. In fact, Boko Haram has stated in the past that it is “a version of al-Qaeda which we align with and respect”⁵⁸ and in 2014 Abubakar Shekau has pledged to sympathize with the Middle Eastern *jihadi* group ISIS⁵⁹ and to recognize its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as “Caliph.”⁶⁰ These *jihadi* alliances provide financial assistance to Boko Haram and help it to train and arm its militants.⁶¹ Some neighboring West-African countries, such as Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, are also suspected of providing sanctuary for the militants and destabilizing the region. Particularly, the significant discovery of oil and gas reserves in the Lake Chad Basin—Boko Haram’s operational base—is causing turmoil in the region. There are rumors that both internal (such as Ayo Oritsejafor, president of the Christian Association of Nigeria) and external actors (such as Nigeria’s neighboring countries) offer financial and other logistic support to the growing insurgent group(s) in the region in return of a bigger piece of “the oil cake.”⁶²

Perceptions on the Causes of the Boko Haram Insurgency

The Boko Haram insurgency portrays a complex conflict for political power and economic resources in response to the relative deprivation of the north intertwined with the complex ethno-religious divide in Nigeria. Although Boko Haram is actively engaged in advocacy for a strict implementation of *Sharia* law, scholars warn that this conceals the “socio-economic and political façade” of the insurgency.⁶³ Thus, even though the driving force behind the terrorist group may seem to be religion, internal inducers are also linked to the political economy of Nigeria and to the weakness of its state apparatus. The question remains whether the public opinion (students in this case) holds this nuanced picture as well. Notwithstanding the argument of scholars that Boko Haram represents economic and political violence in religious disguise,⁶⁴ most students (55.5 percent) maintain that religious extremism is the main reason for the uprising. Only one out of four students (26.7 percent) point to unemployment and poverty as the main reason for the uprising, while a sense of injustice and the neglect of the northern regions by the government is barely seen as the main reason for the uprising (5.5 percent).

Interestingly, important differences exist between the different ethno-religious⁶⁵ and spatial⁶⁶ groups. Among people born in southern states, a great majority (63.0 percent) believes that religious beliefs/extremism is the main reason for the Boko Haram insurgency, whereas almost half of the people from the north (46.6 percent) see unemployment/poverty/lack of opportunities as the main reason. People from the north are also the only ones who sometimes (9.7 percent) indicate injustice/neglect of the north as the main reason. People born in

Table 1. Main reason for the uprising according to different ethno-religious groups.

	Religion	Unemployment	Injustice	Don't know
Place of birth				
North	244 (28.5%)	399 (46.6%)	83 (9.7%)	131 (15.3%)
Central	246 (44.7%)	209 (38.0%)	30 (5.5%)	65 (11.8%)
South	2468 (63.0%)	816 (20.8%)	181 (4.6%)	455 (11.6%)
Ethnic group				
Hausa-Fulani	102 (15.4%)	373 (56.4%)	83 (12.6%)	103 (15.6%)
Yoruba	504 (43.3%)	381 (32.8%)	93 (8.0%)	185 (15.9%)
Igbo	1588 (70.7%)	389 (17.3%)	66 (2.9%)	202 (9.0%)
Religious group				
Muslim	141 (13.2%)	602 (56.5%)	129 (12.1%)	194 (18.2%)
Christian	2772 (66.2%)	805 (19.2%)	163 (3.9%)	447 (10.7%)
Total	2958 (55.5%)	1424 (26.7%)	294 (5.5%)	651 (12.2%)

Note. The residual categories “other” were included in the analyses for the ethnic and religious groups, but this did not yield any particular result. Therefore and because of analytical clarity, these residual groups are excluded from the table.

central Nigeria are more divided on the issue as 38.0 percent indicate unemployment as the main reason, while 44.7 percent think that religious beliefs caused the uprising. These differences are significant: $\chi^2(6) = 407.571$; $p < .001$. The north–south division is even more pronounced when looking at the ethnic and religious group of the respondents. Among both the Hausa-Fulani and Muslims, most people indicate unemployment/poverty as the main reason of the Boko Haram crisis (respectively 56.4 percent and 56.5 percent) while the majority of the Igbo’s and Christians see religion as the main reason (respectively 70.7 percent and 66.2 percent). Yoruba respondents are more divided: 43.3 percent point to religion while one third (32.8 percent) indicate unemployment as the main reason for the uprising. Furthermore, significantly more students from the Hausa-Fulani and Muslim groups mention the neglect of the northern regions by the government as the main reason (12.6 percent and 11.9 percent) compared to Christians (3.9 percent), Igbo (2.9 percent), or Yoruba (8.0 percent). These differences between the groups are significant: $\chi^2(9) = 781.563$; $p < .001$ for the ethnic groups and $\chi^2(6) = 1015.456$; $p < .001$ for the religious groups.

Boko Haram: The Consequences

Since its emergence, Boko Haram has been increasingly resorting to violence as a strategy to achieve its goal.⁶⁷ Between 2000 and 2009 Boko Haram launched a series of attacks on nationwide and international targets such as government buildings and the United Nations House in Abuja as well as on more local places such as markets, banks, shopping complexes, and churches. Both public figures and innocent ordinary citizens were besieged, especially non-indigenes and Christians. The attacks—largely bombings—were mainly concentrated in northern Nigeria.⁶⁸ The killing of their leader Yusuf in 2009 served as a catalyst for further radicalization resulting in a full-fledge violent campaign to wrest power from the secular government.⁶⁹

Since 2009, the death toll has risen yearly, reaching the milestone of at least 20,000 deaths at the end of 2015. Depending on the estimate,⁷⁰ the conflict cost the lives of some 4,621⁷¹ or even 6,664⁷² people in 2014 alone. It is, however, important to note that Boko Haram and the government can both be held responsible for those 20,000 lives. Amnesty International estimates that some 7,000 people have died of starvation, suffocation, or torture while being held in military detention since March 2011 and at least 1,200 men and boys are believed to have been executed by the military since February 2012.⁷³ Furthermore, more than one

million people have fled their homes since the escalation of the violence in 2009 and at least 2,000 young women have been abducted since 2014.⁷⁴

Boko Haram operates on the basis of the Quranic verse stating that “Anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors.”⁷⁵ Consequently, they strive for an Islamic Nigeria and claim to target mostly non-indigenes and Christians. Nevertheless, their recent attacks paint a very confusing picture of their intentions. Innocent citizens have been killed regardless of their religion or ethnicity. Indeed, most of their victims turn out to be Muslim themselves.⁷⁶ Notwithstanding, the repeated public advocacy to Islamize the country could have societal consequences reaching far beyond the physical and economic toll. Indeed, Aghedo and Osumah rightly observe that the uprising could pose a fierce challenge to Nigeria’s national unity.⁷⁷ Former president Goodluck Jonathan seems to be aware of this threat as he repeatedly tries to ensure “even those who think that the country will be divided” in the media that “Boko Haram will not disintegrate this country.”⁷⁸

Perceptions on the Consequences of the Boko Haram Insurgency

Personal and Societal Consequences of the Insurgency

In the survey, diverse statements were aimed at estimating the impact of the insurgency on the lives of the students. Whereas students are divided on the personal consequences of the violence, they largely agree that the crisis can lead to a break-up of Nigeria. Almost 40 percent argue that the violence does not have an impact on their personal life or that they do not feel personally threatened. However, at the same time, another 45 percent indicate that the violence does have an impact and that they do feel threatened. When asking the respondents about the impact of the violence on national unity, almost everyone (67.7 percent) agrees that the Boko Haram crisis could lead to a break-up of Nigeria.

The divided opinions regarding the personal consequences of the crisis can possibly be explained by the ethno-religious background of our respondents. People from the north as well as Hausa-Fulani and Muslims clearly indicate more often that the crisis has had an impact on their personal lives and that they have felt more personally threatened by the violence. This is in keeping with the fact that northern towns and villages have faced more damage—regardless of Boko Haram’s claim to target Christians and non-indigenes. Students from Central-Nigeria and the Yoruba experience less impact of the crisis while students from the South, the Igbo, and Christians suffer the least from the crisis. These differences are significant for all variables: $F(2, 5324) = 63.785$; $p < .001$ for the north–central–south division; $F(3, 5323) = 41.621$; $p < .001$ for the ethnic groups; and $t(1607.199) = -8.046$; $p < .001$ for the religious groups (variable 1: impact on personal life); and $F(2, 5324) = 117.868$; $p < .001$ for the north–central–south division; $F(3, 5323) = 53.488$; $p < .001$ for the ethnic groups; and $t(5251) = -10.810$; $p < .001$ for the religious groups (variable 2: personally threatened).

Remarkably, when assessing whether or not the crisis can lead to a break-up of the country, Christians—who are personally less affected by the crisis—are more strongly convinced that Boko Haram poses a threat to national unity compared to Muslims; $t(1502.617) = -6.737$; $p < .001$. In a similar vein, people born in the south or belonging to the Igbo ethnic group exhibit a stronger conviction that the issue can break up the country compared to people born in the north or belonging to the Hausa-Fulani group. People

from central Nigeria or the Yoruba hold an in-between position. These differences are significant; $F(2, 5324) = 16.169$; $p < .001$ for the north–central–south division; $F(3, 5323) = 15.433$; $p < .001$ for the ethnic groups.

Understanding the Insurgency

Although Muslims suffer more severely from the crisis, they are also somewhat more forgiving toward Boko Haram militants. Muslims as well as students born in the north or belonging to the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group agree slightly, but significantly, more often with the statement that militants should be offered amnesty once disarmed, in comparison with Christians or students born in the south/central Nigeria and belonging to the Igbo/Yoruba. These differences are significant: $t(1578.839) = -7.915$; $p < .001$ for the religious groups; $F(2, 5324) = 27.681$; $p < .001$ for the north–central–south division; and $F(3, 5323) = 21.329$; $p < .001$ for the ethnic groups.

Additionally, Muslims understand the insurgency more given the deprivation of the area compared to Christians—although, on average, most students disagreed with the statement that the uprising is understandable; $t(1525.811) = -15.977$; $p < .001$. Likewise, students born in the north or belonging to the Hausa-Fulani understand the crisis more compared to their fellow students from south/central Nigeria or the Igbo/Yoruba. These differences are significant: $F(2, 5324) = 77.908$; $p < .001$ for the north–central–south division; $F(3, 6323) = 108.378$; $p < .001$ for the ethnic groups. These results alongside the finding that more northerners/Muslims/Hausa-Fulani see poverty as the main reason for the uprising suggest that the same grievances mobilizing Boko Haram militants are, to some extent, also felt by students from the same ethno-religious and spatial background who do not actively engage in violence.

Boko Haram: The Response

Aghedo and Osumah⁷⁹ argue that the debate on how to respond to the insurgency has been polarized between those who support coercive counterterrorism on the one hand and advocates of conciliatory measures on the other hand. While the former group holds that force rather than dialogue would be more effective in dealing with the organization, the latter doubts the efficiency of the state security apparatus. Therefore they suggest dialogue and amnesty, among other things. However, as the history of different violent conflicts in Nigeria shows, the management of uprisings has largely been driven by coercion and a heavy-handed state security approach. The Boko Haram crisis is no exception.⁸⁰ Media seem to follow this military answer as northern-based Nigerian paper, *The Daily Trust*, asked “the federal government to please deploy troops and modern equipment to save our people.”⁸¹ Especially since 2009, the insurgency has been tackled by fierce state repression.⁸² Since 2009, the Nigerian military has arrested at least 20,000 people (mostly men and boys) of whom many died during imprisonment.⁸³ As a result, Boko Haram holds even more grievances vis-à-vis the national security agencies creating a vicious cycle of violence and insecurity. The military has also been criticized nationally and internationally for the way they have been handling the crisis. Civil society associations have repeatedly accused the army of human rights violations and extrajudicial killings of suspected members of the sect.⁸⁴ However, it is important to note that the government—both at a state and federal level—has made rapprochements to the Islamic militants as well. Local citizens have also devoted attention to security and surveillance.⁸⁵ Local residents from

Maiduguri (the “capital of Boko Haram”), for instance, created the Civilian Joint Task Force to protect their town and neighboring villages.⁸⁶

Some authors—and especially journalists—take the analysis one step further by suggesting policy prescriptions to tackle the crisis. While Aghedo and Osumah as well as David et al. claim that the government needs to address the sources of socioeconomic inequalities and human insecurity first, Khan sees a political change as the only alternative for lasting peace and stability in Nigeria.⁸⁷ In early 2015, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and former General Muhammadu Buhari took over power from the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and Goodluck Jonathan. One of the promises of the new president was a fresh strategy to tackle the insurgency including concrete military action to build a more efficient and effective coalition. He even set a December 2015 deadline to stamp out the armed group.⁸⁸

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of diverse statements on the Boko Haram crisis according to ethno-religious groups.

Dependent variable	North <i>M (SD)</i>	Central <i>M (SD)</i>	South <i>M (SD)</i>
Boko Haram uprising has had an impact on my personal life	3.49 (1.332)	3.09 (1.389)	2.93 (1.315)
I feel or have felt personally threatened by the Boko Haram violence or attacks	3.53 (1.311)	3.30 (1.397)	2.80 (1.362)
The Boko Haram crisis can lead to the break-up of Nigeria	3.62 (1.368)	3.47 (1.354)	3.77 (1.200)
Boko Haram militants should be offered amnesty once they disarm and demobilize	2.80 (1.421)	2.58 (1.405)	2.43 (1.310)
Given the deprivation in the North, the Boko Haram uprising is understandable	2.61 (1.308)	2.38 (1.187)	2.08 (1.127)
Boko Haram can only be stopped militarily	3.52 (1.283)	3.37 (1.317)	3.27 (1.240)
Boko Haram will be defeated permanently within the next year	3.82 (1.081)	3.47 (1.087)	3.12 (1.066)
	Hausa-Fulani <i>M (SD)</i>	Yoruba <i>M (SD)</i>	Igbo <i>M (SD)</i>
Boko Haram uprising has had an impact on my personal life	3.55 (1.328)	2.91 (1.279)	3.07 (1.320)
I feel or have felt personally threatened by the Boko Haram violence or attacks	3.56 (1.296)	2.75 (1.318)	2.89 (1.387)
The Boko Haram crisis can lead to the break-up of Nigeria	3.55 (1.407)	3.63 (1.189)	3.84 (1.187)
Boko Haram militants should be offered amnesty once they disarm and demobilize	2.87 (1.429)	2.52 (1.275)	2.40 (1.334)
Given the deprivation in the North, the Boko Haram uprising is understandable	2.82 (1.306)	2.37 (1.147)	1.97 (1.107)
Boko Haram can only be stopped militarily	3.61 (1.269)	3.34 (1.177)	3.25 (1.262)
Boko Haram will be defeated permanently within the next year	4.02 (1.011)	3.34 (1.008)	3.10 (1.070)
	Muslim <i>M (SD)</i>		Christian <i>M (SD)</i>
Boko Haram uprising has had an impact on my personal life	3.36 (1.367)		2.97 (1.322)
I feel or have felt personally threatened by the Boko Haram violence or attacks	3.38 (1.363)		2.87 (1.374)
The Boko Haram crisis can lead to the break-up of Nigeria	3.47 (1.378)		3.78 (1.202)
Boko Haram militants should be offered amnesty once they disarm and demobilize	2.80 (1.402)		2.43 (1.320)
Given the deprivation in the North, the Boko Haram uprising is understandable	2.73 (1.257)		2.06 (1.123)
Boko Haram can only be stopped militarily	3.54 (1.240)		3.26 (1.254)
Boko Haram will be defeated permanently within the next year	3.84 (1.053)		3.14 (1.064)

Perceptions on the Government's Response to the Boko Haram Insurgency

On average, students tend to support the military counterterrorism strategy the government is applying, but it is clear that students born in the north tend to hold different opinions compared with the ones born in the south. People from the north share a stronger belief in a military solution compared to people born in central and south Nigeria; $F(2, 5324) = 14.323, p < .001$. In a similar vein, Muslims and Hausa-Fulani agree more often that Boko Haram can only be stopped militarily compared to Christians and people belonging to the Igbo or Yoruba group; $t(5251) = -6.603; p < .001$ for religious groups and $F(3, 5323) = 15.761; p < .001$ for ethnic groups.

Moreover, students born in the north as well as Hausa-Fulani and Muslims have more confidence in the new president—and Muslim—Muhammadu Buhari and his military action plan as they agree more often that Boko Haram will be defeated permanently within the next year. In contrast, students from the south, Igbo, and Christians have less confidence in the new president and in a military solution. These differences are significant: $F(2, 5324) = 160.636; p < .001$ for the place of birth; $F(3, 5323) = 137.973; p < .001$ for the ethnic groups; and $t(1650.126) = -18.847; p < .001$ for the religious groups.

Conclusion: Laying Bare Fault lines

While the Buhari administration is intensifying its military campaign against the activities of Boko Haram, scholars are trying to unravel as many aspects of the insurgency as possible because they agree that one must understand the problem in order to solve it properly. Those articles, mainly oriented toward policymaking, are largely qualitative and narrative in nature. Besides academic information, other available sources on Boko Haram include statements (mainly of politicians) in news reports. Quantitative, empirical information on public perceptions vis-à-vis Boko Haram remains scarce. This study used the Corpers' Survey conducted in five Nigerian universities in 2015 because it offered some of the most recent and extensive data to scrutinize Nigerians' perceptions on Boko Haram. Students were asked about the main reason behind the sect's uprising, the personal and societal impact of the violence, and the military solution the government is applying. This empirical study yielded several results.

First, if explaining the purpose and philosophy behind Boko Haram is challenging, it is possibly even more so because the Nigerian populace seems to filter its explanations for the crisis through ethnoreligious prisms. In general, most students tend to interpret the Boko Haram uprising as a religious crisis—although scholars warn that Boko Haram's active advocacy for a strict implementation of *Sharia* law conceals its "socio-economic and political façade."⁸⁹ However, important differences are noted when looking at the ethno-religious and spatial background of the students. People born in the south, belonging to the Igbo ethnic group, or Christians are significantly more likely to link the crisis with religious extremism. In other words, they are more likely to perceive Boko Haram as a "planned Islamic jihad against Christians in Nigeria."⁹⁰ Muslim people (frequently but not exclusively belonging to the Hausa-Fulani group and born in the north), on the other hand, tend to argue more often that unemployment and poverty have caused the uprising. Moreover, they are also the only ones who sometimes indicate that a sense of injustice and the neglect of the northern regions could be a possible cause. People born in central Nigeria or from the

Yoruba group hold an in-between position, although they slightly lean more toward the opinions of southern people. These results indicate that the problems of northern Nigeria such as poverty, unemployment, and social injustice are shared within the larger Muslim community. This is not surprising given that northern Nigeria remains the most underdeveloped part of the country up until today [March 2016]. This situation can further foster grievances, possibly spurring extremist tendencies in northern Nigeria.

Second, although the conflict is to blame for over 20,000 deaths, the crisis did not have an extremely big impact on the personal lives of most students. However, it is clear that—notwithstanding Boko Haram's explicit claim to target Christians—Muslims are considerably more affected by the violence and they feel more threatened. In this respect, it is intriguing to note that Muslims are also more lenient toward the Boko Haram militancy: they are slightly more willing to grant amnesty to disarmed Boko Haram militants and they understand the insurgency better given the deprivation of the north. Coupled with the finding that they perceive the Boko Haram crisis more often as an outcome of poverty and unemployment, we conclude that the grievances mobilizing Boko Haram are also felt by students from the same background. Interestingly, however, students from this background (i.e., Muslim, Hausa-Fulani, or born in the north), are less convinced that the conflict can lead to a breakup of the country. On the contrary, their Christian counterparts are more afraid that the Boko Haram crisis will disintegrate the country—a result that can be interpreted in line with their conviction that Boko Haram is mainly a religious (Muslim) threat.

Third, the state is mainly waging war against the terrorist group. Muslim Hausa-Fulani students born in the north are more strongly convinced that this is the right strategy and they agree more often with President Buhari that the militants will be defeated permanently within one year [2015] compared to their southern counterparts. In other words, they seem to have more confidence in president Muhammadu Buhari who happens to be a Muslim and a northerner, but also a former general. However, as our previous conclusion indicates, the presence of economic grievances among students from northern Nigeria and Muslims suggests that the government should equally address the economic deprivation of the north in order to address the longstanding grievances.

In line with Olaniyan and Asuelime⁹¹ and with Onapajo and Usman,⁹² we argue that it is possible that the impact of the Boko Haram crisis goes beyond the direct physical and economic impact as it divides people's thoughts on the issue. Perceptions on the insurgency across Nigeria's disparate nationalities reveal the centrality of "ethno-religious thinking." This has been defined by Olaniyan and Asuelime⁹³ as "Nigerians' reading of ethnic and religious meanings into most actions in the country"; and Nigerian students clearly read the Boko Haram crisis through such ethno-religious glasses. Public opinion—at least the one held by Nigerian students—is polarized over Boko Haram's agenda, consequences, and solutions; and these polarized perceptions reflect long-standing grievances. Based on our study, we therefore conclude that Boko Haram painfully lays bare Nigeria's ethno-religious cleavages, possibly undermining efforts at nation-building. Because interpretations of the crisis exhibit these frames, it is not unlikely that the crisis has led to a stronger north-south divide and a derogation of inter-group relations. Ethno-religious thinking can, in turn, reinforce the societal divides used to explain the differences in interpretations. In other words: does Boko Haram fuel the flames? While this question falls out of the scope of this cross-sectional study, it nonetheless forms an interesting angle for future, longitudinal, and more nationally

representative research aimed at establishing Boko Haram's impact on Nigeria's north-south divide in more detail.

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Notes

1. UN News Section, "UN Calls for Immediate Release of Abducted School Girls in North-Eastern Nigeria," April 16, 2014. Available at http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47593#_Vks7or-G5Bk (accessed 12 November 2015).
2. Aslam Khan, "Boko Haram: The Multifaceted Story of Terror and Cultism," *Strategic Analysis* 39 (4) (2015), pp. 433–437. doi:10.1080/09700161.2015.1047228
3. Tracy McVeigh, "Michelle Obama Raises Pressure over Kidnapped Schoolgirls," *The Guardian*, 11 May 2014. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/10/michelle-obama-nigeria-presidential-address> (accessed 7 January 2016).
4. Institute for Economics & Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism," 2015, p. 4.
5. Freedom C Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis Explained," *African Security Review* 19(2) (2010), pp. 54–67. doi:10.1080/10246029.2010.503061; Freedom C. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, Analysis and Emerging Trend," *Security Journal* 25(2) (2012), pp. 134–51. doi:10.1057/sj.2011.15; Khan, "Boko Haram: The Multifaceted Story of Terror and Cultism"; Iro Aghedo and Oarhe Osumah, "Insurgency in Nigeria: A Comparative Study of Niger Delta and Boko Haram Uprisings," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50(2) (2014), pp. 208–222. doi:10.1177/0021909614520726; Iro Aghedo and Oarhe Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising: How Should Nigeria Respond?," *Third World Quarterly* 33(5) (2012), pp. 853–869. doi:10.1080/01436597.2012.674701; Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, ed., *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security, and the State in Nigeria* (Los Angeles, CA: Tsehah Publishers, 2015).
6. Ojochenemi J. David, Lucky E. Asuelime, and Hakeem Onapajo, "Conclusion: Responses and Recommendations to End Boko Haram Terrorism," in *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 103–114. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-21230-2
7. Amnesty International, "Nigeria: Horror in Numbers," 3 June 2015. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/06/nigeria-horror-in-numbers/> (accessed 11 November 2015); Amnesty International, "Nigeria: Abducted Women and Girls Forced to Join Boko Haram Attacks," 14 April 2015. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/04/nigeria-abducted-women-and-girls-forced-to-join-boko-haram-attacks/> (accessed 21 December 2015); Vishala Sri-Pathma, "Nigeria's 'Champagne' Economy Bucks Boko Haram Effect," *BBC News*, 27 March 2015.
8. Azeez Olaniyan and Lucky E. Asuelime, "Boko Haram Insurgency and the Widening of Cleavages in Nigeria," *African Security* 7(2) (2014), pp. 91–109. doi:10.1080/19392206.2014.909249.

9. Hakeem Onapajo and Abubakar A. Usman, "Fuelling the Flames: Boko Haram and Deteriorating Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35(1) (2015), pp. 106–122. doi:10.1080/13602004.2015.1007667.
10. Freedom C Onuoha, "Boko Haram & The Evolving Salafi Jihadist Threat in Nigeria," in Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, ed., *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security, and the State in Nigeria* (Los Angeles, CA: Tsehai Publishers, 2015), pp. 183–222.
11. Although we argue that "sect" is a questionable and contested term, we follow prior research in labeling Boko Haram as a sect. See, for example, Aghedo and Osumah, "Insurgency in Nigeria"; Ojochenemi J. David, Lucky E. Asuelime, and Hakeem Onapajo, *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2015). doi:10.1007/978-3-319-21230-2. Subject has disappeared: We also call it a terrorist group as international organizations (like the UN) or governments (like the United States) have put Boko Haram on their lists of terrorist organizations.
12. On the one hand, a group known as the Sahaba Muslim Youth Organization, which evolved in 1995, is believed to have transformed into Boko Haram. On the other hand, others argue that the sect derives from a group known as *Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra* that emerged in 1995 under the leadership of Abubakah Lawan. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram"; Ojochenemi J. David, Lucky E. Asuelime, and Hakeem Onapajo, "Evolution, Ideological Foundation, and Strategy of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria," in *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 65–81. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-21230-2. Moreover, it is assumed that the group is an outgrowth of the Maitatsine uprising of the 1980s. Abimbola O. Adesoji, "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State," *Africa Today* 57(4) (2011), pp. 98–119.
13. Khan, "Boko Haram: The Multifaceted Story of Terror and Cultism"; Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram"; Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge"; Pérouse de Montclos, *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security, and the State in Nigeria*.
14. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram"; David, Asuelime, and Onapajo, "Evolution, Ideological Foundation, and Strategy of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria."
15. Amnesty International, "Boko Haram at a Glance," 29 January 2015. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/01/boko-haram-glance/> (accessed 25 February 2016).
16. Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising: How Should Nigeria Respond?"
17. Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis Explained."
18. Ahmed Aliyu, Ravichandran Moorthy, and Nor Azizan Bin Idris, "Towards Understanding the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria," *Asian Social Science* 11(10) (2015), pp. 307–317. doi:10.5539/ass.v11n10p307.
19. Almajiri are children sent to live and study under renowned Islamic teachers. As of 2010, it is estimated that Nigeria hosts about 9.5 million Almajiris, with over 80 percent concentrated in northern Nigeria. These children often live in very appalling conditions, making them especially vulnerable to recruitment into extremists sects like Boko Haram. When recruited, reports show that the children are predominantly being deployed as foot soldiers; Freedom C. Onuoha, "Boko Haram: Nigeria's Extremist Islamic Sect," 2012; Freedom C. Onuoha, "Boko Haram: Nigeria's Extremist Islamic Sect," Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 29 February 2012; Freedom C Onuoha, "Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?," United States Institute for Peace Special Report 348 (Washington, DC, June 2014).
20. David, Asuelime, and Onapajo, "Evolution, Ideological Foundation, and Strategy of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria."
21. Amnesty International, "Boko Haram at a Glance."
22. Shekau has repeatedly been reported dead, but this has never been confirmed officially. David, Asuelime, and Onapajo, "Evolution, Ideological Foundation, and Strategy of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria."
23. During the final phase of this publication (2 August, 2016), ISIS announced that Boko Haram has a new leader –Abu Musab al-Barnawi– because it rejects Shekau's deadly attacks on moderate Muslims. However, it is still unclear as to who is the group's leader as an audio message supposedly recorded by Shekau was released the same day denying al-

- Barniwi's claim; Ruth Maclean and Isaac Abrak, "Isis Tries to Impose New Leader on Boko Haram in Nigeria," *The Guardian*, August 5, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/05/isis-tries-to-impose-new-leader-on-boko-haram-in-nigeria> (accessed 8 August 2016).
24. Ibid.
 25. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram"; Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising"; Amnesty International, "Boko Haram at a Glance"; Onuoha, "Boko Haram: Nigeria's Extremist Islamic Sect."
 26. Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising"; Amnesty International, "Boko Haram at a Glance."
 27. Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism," p. 4.
 28. Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising."
 29. Jacob Zenn, "Nigeria: Boko Haram Is Not 'Defeated' but Buhari's Strategy Is Working," *All Africa*, 5 January 2016. Available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201601051226.html> (accessed 29 February 2016).
 30. Amnesty International, "Nigeria 2015/2016," 25 February 2016. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/nigeria/report-nigeria/> (accessed 29 February 2016).
 31. To our knowledge, the studies of Aghedo and Osumah and of Deckard et al. are one of the few studies using empirical data. While the former is limited to only 80 participants and administers an elite group of academics, journalists, security operatives and politicians, the latter is designed for other research objectives. Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising"; Natalie Delia Deckard, Atta Barkindo, and David Jacobson, "Religiosity and Rebellion in Nigeria: Considering Boko Haram in the Radical Tradition," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38(7) (2015), pp. 510–528. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1022443
 32. These are: the University of Nigeria Nsukka in Enugu State, University of Abuja in the capital (FCT), University of Lagos in Lagos State, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto in Sokoto State, and University of Port Harcourt in Rivers State. It is noteworthy that none of the sampled universities are located in the north-east of Nigeria where the insurgency is concentrated. At the time of research, this was non-feasible for security reasons.
 33. Listwise deletion is applied for the statistical analysis. 5,327 respondents with the complete information are included in the analyses.
 34. Although the distribution of the dependent variables is not always normal and although they have a semi-categorical nature (see Appendix A), we argue—in keeping with Meuleman, Loosveldt, and Edmonds—that our analyses are robust to violations of normality as our sample size ($N = 5,327$) is large enough. Bart Meuleman, Geert Loosveldt, and Viktor Emonds, "Regression Analysis: Assumptions and Diagnostics," in Henning Best and Christof Wolf, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Regression Analysis and Causal Inference* (London: SAGE Publications, 2015), pp. 83–110. However, given this non-normal distribution, we checked the robustness of our findings using a non-parametric test (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis test). The robustness of our findings was confirmed.
 35. Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis Explained."
 36. Aghedo and Osumah, "Insurgency in Nigeria"; Shahira Fahmy, "High Drama on the High Seas: Peace versus War Journalism Framing of an Israeli/Palestinian-Related Incident," *The International Communication Gazette* 76(1) (2014), pp. 86–105. doi:10.1177/1748048513504046; Abimbola Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria," *Africa Spectrum* 45(2) (2010), pp. 95–108. doi:10.2307/25798918; Ali S. Yusufu Bagaji et al., "Boko Haram and the Recurring Bomb Attacks in Nigeria: Attempt to Impose Religious Ideology through Terrorism?," *Cross-Cultural Communication* 8(1) (2012), pp. 33–41. doi:10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020120801.1370; N. D. Danjibo, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The 'Maitatsine' and 'Boko Haram' Crises in northern Nigeria," *Peace and Conflict Studies Paper Series* (Ibadan, 2009); Babjee Pothuraju, "Boko Haram's Persistent Threat in Nigeria," Background, 2012; Khan, "Boko Haram."
 37. A preliminary remark should be made as the Nigerian political scene changed dramatically in May 2015 with Goodluck Jonathan peacefully handing over power to Muhammadu Buhari. This means specifically that power switched from the PDP and a southern, Christian president to the

- APC with a northern, Muslim president. When talking about governance, institutions, or the government in this section, we aim at the Yar'Adua and Jonathan administrations because it was during these reigns that the Boko Haram insurgency escalated.
38. Ojochenemi J. David, Lucky E. Asuelime, and Hakeem Onapajo, "The Phenomenon of Boko Haram in Nigeria," in *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 1–20, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-21230-2
 39. Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria"; Danjibo, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence"; Ojochenemi J. David, Lucky E. Asuelime, and Hakeem Onapajo, "RC of Boko Haram Terrorism: Socio-Economic Prism," in *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers* (New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 83–101. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-21230-2.
 40. Nic Cheeseman, *Democracy in Africa: New Approaches to African History* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Polity Press, 2015), pp. 218–221; Rotimi Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2001).
 41. Danjibo, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence."
 42. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, Analysis and Emerging Trend."
 43. Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria"; Bagaji et al., "Boko Haram and the Recurring Bomb Attacks in Nigeria"; Danjibo, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence"; Pothuraju, "Boko Haram's Persistent Threat in Nigeria"; Bruce Hoffman, "A First Draft of the History of America's Ongoing Wars on Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38(1) (2015), pp. 75–83, doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.974405
 44. Olaniyan and Asuelime, "Boko Haram Insurgency and the Widening of Cleavages in Nigeria."
 45. "Presbyterian Church Urges Politicians to Preserve Nation's Democracy," *The Guardian*, 18 November 2014.
 46. David, Asuelime, and Onapajo, "RC of Boko Haram Terrorism: Socio-Economic Prism."
 47. BBC News, "Nigerians Living in Poverty Rise to Nearly 61%," BBC News, 13 February 2012. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17015873> (accessed 9 March 2016).
 48. Ibid.
 49. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram"; Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising"; David, Asuelime, and Onapajo, "Evolution, Ideological Foundation, and Strategy of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria."
 50. Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising: How Should Nigeria Respond?," p. 861.
 51. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram."
 52. Aliyu, Moorthy, and Idris, "Towards Understanding the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria"; Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising."
 53. David, Asuelime, and Onapajo, *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers*.
 54. Khan, "Boko Haram: The Multifaceted Story of Terror and Cultism."
 55. Mohammed Aly Sergie and Toni Johnson, "Boko Haram," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2015. Available at <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739> (accessed 23 November 2015); Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising."
 56. Gudrun Østby and Henrik Urdal, "Demographic Factors and Civil War," in Edward Newman and Karel Jr. DeRouen, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Civil Wars* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 131–144. A comprehensive outline of how the youth bulge syndrome has influenced the uprising is beyond the purview of this article. For a detailed analysis, see Iro Aghedo and Surulola James Eke, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in northern Nigeria," *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies* 28(3) (2013), pp. 97–123.
 57. David, Asuelime, and Onapajo, "Evolution, Ideological Foundation, and Strategy of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria."
 58. Cited in Ojochenemi J. David, Lucky E. Asuelime, and Hakeem Onapajo, "Evolution, Ideological Foundation, and Strategy of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria," in *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers* (New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 65–81.
 59. Peter Lewis and Darren Kew, "Nigeria's Hopeful Election," *Journal of Democracy* 26(3) (2015), pp. 94–109. doi:10.1353/jod.2015.0039

60. Adam Higazi, "Mobilisation into and against Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria," in Kadya Tall, Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle, and Michel Cahen, eds., *Collective Mobilisations in Africa: Enough Is Enough!* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 305–358.
61. Ahmad Salkida, "Boko Haram's Renewed Creed," *Sahara Reporter*, 2013.
62. Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising"; Khan, "Boko Haram: The Multifaceted Story of Terror and Cultism."
63. David, Asuelime, and Onapajo, "RC of Boko Haram Terrorism.," p. 83.
64. Ibid.
65. Without disregarding the wide range of religious and especially ethnic diversity, we opt to recode all religions and ethnic groups included into two main religious and three main ethnic categories for the sake of analytical clarity. The religious groups included were Christians (including Catholics, Protestants, and Other Christian) and Muslims (including Sunni and Shi'a) besides a residual category (i.e., No/Other religion). The ethnic groups included are the Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba ethnic group along with a residual category comprising a wide range of smaller ethnic groups (i.e., Others). The residual categories are included in the analyses in order to include as many cases as possible; but as this did not yield any noteworthy result, these categories are not mentioned in the results.
66. The north–central–south division is based on Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. All states included in the question "V6 = In which state were you born?" were regrouped into the six geopolitical zones. Based on these zones, "north" includes students born in the North-East and North-West zone, "central" includes students born in the Middle Belt (i.e., North-Central zone), and the "south" includes students born in the South-East, South-South, or South-West zone.
67. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, Analysis and Emerging Trend."
68. Aghedo and Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising: How Should Nigeria Respond?"
69. Onuoha, "The Audacity of the Boko Haram"; Daniel E. Agbiboa, "Peace at Daggers Drawn? Boko Haram and the State of Emergency in Nigeria," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37(1) (2014), pp. 41–67. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.853602
70. Moreover, it is worth noting that all numbers of fatalities in the insurgency remain estimates and are, consequently, bound to have a substantial margin of error. Higazi, "Mobilisation into and against Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria."
71. T. Pettersson and P. Wallensteen, "Armed Conflicts, 1946–2014," *Journal of Peace Research* 52(4) (2015), pp. 536–550. doi:10.1177/0022343315595927
72. Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2015."
73. Amnesty International, "Nigeria: Horror in Numbers."
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Appendix A. Dependent variables and their descriptives ($N = 5,327$).

Question	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Boko Haram has had an impact on my personal life ($M = 3.04$; $SD = 1.341$)</i>		
1 = disagree completely	979	18.4
2 = disagree	1,007	18.9
3 = neither agree, nor disagree	927	17.4
4 = agree	1,666	31.3
5 = agree completely	748	14.0
<i>I feel/have felt personally threatened by the Boko Haram violence ($M = 2.97$; $SD = 1.387$)</i>		
1 = disagree completely	1,105	20.7
2 = disagree	1,099	20.6
3 = neither agree, nor disagree	748	14.0
4 = agree	1,588	29.8
5 = agree completely	787	14.8
<i>The Boko Haram crisis can lead to the break-up of Nigeria ($M = 3.71$; $SD = 1.249$)</i>		
1 = disagree completely	416	7.8
2 = disagree	672	12.6
3 = neither agree, nor disagree	630	11.8
4 = agree	1,924	36.1
5 = agree completely	1,685	31.6
<i>The Boko Haram militants should be offered amnesty once they disarm and demobilize ($M = 2.50$; $SD = 1.345$)</i>		
1 = disagree completely	1,704	32.0
2 = disagree	1,215	22.8
3 = neither agree, nor disagree	890	16.7
4 = agree	1,053	19.8
5 = agree completely	465	8.7
<i>Given the deprivation in the north, the Boko Haram uprising is understandable ($M = 2.20$; $SD = 1.181$)</i>		
1 = disagree completely	1,897	35.6
2 = disagree	1,611	30.2
3 = neither agree, nor disagree	932	17.5
4 = agree	635	11.9
5 = agree completely	252	4.7
<i>Boko Haram can only be stopped militarily ($M = 3.32$; $SD = 1.258$)</i>		
1 = disagree completely	464	8.7
2 = disagree	1,047	19.7
3 = neither agree, nor disagree	1,352	25.4
4 = agree	1,265	23.7
5 = agree completely	1,199	22.5
<i>Boko Haram will be defeated permanently within the next year ($M = 3.27$; $SD = 1.103$)</i>		
1 = disagree completely	411	7.7
2 = disagree	600	11.3
3 = neither agree, nor disagree	2,322	43.6
4 = agree	1,117	21.0
5 = agree completely	877	16.5

Appendix B. Sociodemographic variables and their descriptives ($N = 6,830$).

	Frequency	Percentage
University		
UNN Nsukka	1,561	22.9
Univ. of Abuja	1,085	15.9
Univ. of Lagos	1,235	18.1
UDU Sokoto	1,286	18.8
Univ. of Port Harcourt	1,663	24.3
<i>Total valid</i>	<i>6,830</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Gender		
Male	3,817	55.9
Female	2,983	43.7
<i>Total valid</i>	<i>6,800</i>	<i>99.6</i>
Religion		
Christian	5,101	74.7
Muslim	1,510	22.1
Other/No religion	1,01	1.5
<i>Total valid</i>	<i>6,712</i>	<i>98.3</i>
Place of birth		
North	1,248	18.3
North-East zone	119	1.7
North-West zone	1,129	16.5
Central	711	10.4
North-Central zone	711	10.4
South	4,819	70.6
South-East zone	1,630	23.9
South-South zone	1,376	20.1
South-West zone	1,813	26.5
Not in Nigeria	29	0.4
<i>Total valid</i>	<i>6,807</i>	<i>99.7</i>
Ethnicity		
Hausa-Fulani	991	14.5
Yoruba	1,409	20.6
Igbo	2,706	39.6
Other	1,639	24.0
<i>Total valid</i>	<i>6,745</i>	<i>98.8</i>